

The Ballarat Naturalist

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March 2022



February Excursion—Lake Wendouree

Often, our own backyard is the best place to see nature at its best. About 20 members attended our last excursion to various parts of our parklands including Victoria Park and Lake Wendouree.

Led by Emily, we sighted a few plants of the endangered Matted Flax-lily, 2 specimens which still had their very pretty drooping flowers (below).

Having moved north to the North Gardens Wetland, adjacent to Lake Wendouree, Carol Hall got some great close-ups of Great Crested Grebes in action (above).



Photo: Andy Arnold

North Gardens Wetland is just one source of water for Lake Wendouree. Leader, John G started with a discussion on the various sources of water that keep the lake filled. This included water from the treatment plant, Paul's wetland and various drains, all of which feed into the North Gardens wetland/s for further purification before flowing onto the lake.

The photo below is of a nesting Dusky Moorhen whose nest has been built over one of the pond outlets. Also, a dragonfly nymph resting on a reed.

We then slowly walked up to the popular ‘Pipers’ area, bird watching. John, using his telescope, was able to give us closer views of young pied cormorants in the nest on the island. We noted 2 probably immature Hard Head ducks nearby, also a couple of Musk Ducks. Over the visit we saw 4 Great Crested Grebes, one of which had a young one - grey with stripes Swans, Eurasian Coots, Dusky Moorhens, Ibis, as usual were plentiful. We watched and heard Reed Warblers in both areas.

Val Hocking



Photos provided by Val Hocking (above) and Andy Arnold (below)



Excerpts from Club meeting held Feb 4, 2022

Opening and Apologies

Attendance: President Bill Elder welcomed 20 members and three visitors.

Apologies: S. Faull, M. Moravec, A. Grant, K. Owen and M. Rich.

Motion: that the Apologies be accepted.

Moved: C. Hall **Seconded:** F. Hanrahan **Carried.**

Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Motion: that the Minutes of the previous Meeting (December 3, 2021) be accepted as a true & accurate record.

Moved: A. Arnold **Seconded:** K. Elder **Carried.**

Business Arising from Correspondence:

- Update: Bill and John P updated members about the Hepburn Shire Council's proposed Creswick Trails Project. It was noted that the Hepburn Shire Council has now issued itself a planning permit to install 62km of mountain bike trails as the Creswick Trails Project. Bill, Bernadette and Susan Kruss all spoke eloquently against the Trails Project in its current form at the Council Meeting in December 2021 (viewable online), but to no avail.

The tough decision not to fight the approval at VCAT was made for a variety of reasons. The people that persevered to put in a huge effort to try to ensure that the land managers and Hepburn Shire Council's project management team, consultants and contractors gave the significant environmental, ecological, historical and cultural values of the project site appropriate consideration and amended their plans accordingly were given special mention: Bernadette Cheesman, John Petheram, Bill Elder, Margaret Rich, Norm Stimson and Richard Goonan (both from Bendigo FNC).

Peter D also offered his thanks to John P for his immense amount of effort and work on the project.

We do have the opportunity over the next few years to monitor the construction phase and hold the Council to account.

- Moorabool Koala Count: opportunity to participate as individuals or a Club. Emily to send details to members.

Treasurer's Report

Opening bal: \$8,468.02

Income \$4.04

Expenses \$47.79

Closing bal: \$8,424.27

Motion: that the Treasurer's Report be accepted and tabled in-voices be approved for payment.

Moved: K. Elder

Seconded: C. Dalman **Carried.**

General Business:

February field trip, Sunday 6th Feb. from 1.00pm: Meet at Victoria Park in Oak Ave adjacent to the public toilets and with your vehicle facing east at 1pm sharp. We will look for the summer-flowering, endangered Matted Flax-lily before driving across to the North Gardens Wetlands to go for a bird walk around the wetlands and along the edge of Lake Wendouree from Fairyland to the Swan Pool and back. BYO afternoon tea. To be led by Emily Noble and John Gregurke.

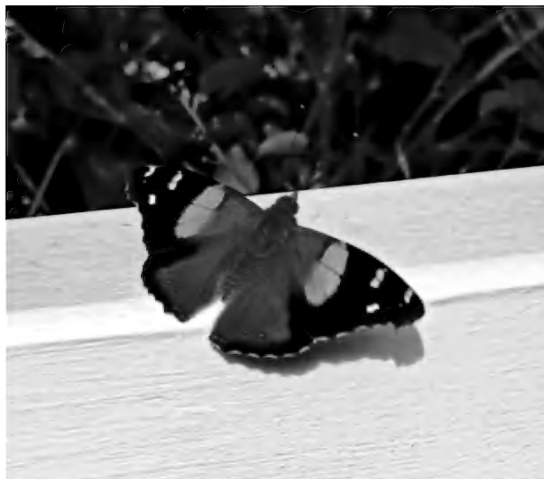
You must be able to show evidence of your double-vaccination status to join the field trip and/or afternoon tea.

We discussed the opportunity to have a mid-month excursion in February featuring a paddle-steamer trip around the bird-filled mud islands in the middle of Lake Wendouree. We can book it just for our group, if we have between 22-30 people interested in coming along. This could include family members or we could invite members of BirdLife Ballarat to join us if there are places available. The cost is \$15/head (or less if we get more participants). Val will get in touch with Golden City paddle-steamers re. available/ preferred dates and times, and Emily will subsequently send out possible dates/ times to members.

Field Reports

Andy saw a Yellow Admiral butterfly (*Vanessa itea*) on a nettle in his garden.

Val saw White-winged Choughs at Sparrow Ground for the first time. Powerful Owl was spotted on the Yendon-Lal Lal Rd sign by Judith's husband one night recently.



Yellow Admiral (stock photo)

One for the Diary!

Mozzie Month is now!

We know most people hate mozzies! They can be so annoying and can spoil a picnic or BBQ or a good night's sleep.

Monitoring mosquitoes is essential for mosquito management and mosquito-borne diseases prevention. But mosquitoes also have important ecological roles to play, including as effective pollinators.



Join hundreds of citizen scientists from all over Australia in this mosquito monitoring initiative.

You can participate through the online citizen science platform iNaturalist, from anywhere in Australia.

It's a global network of scientists and passionate naturalists who share their knowledge and learn together.

You can learn about species and check their distribution through the ID tools.

Register to our online workshop about using iNaturalist to share observations of mosquitoes. We will also give some tips on how to take the best identifiable photos.

For more information, contact mozziemonitors@unisa.edu.au

Members' Images

The topic was Lake Wendouree.
Six members shared images and stories of
the birds, insects, history, scenery or plants of
Ballarat's own Lake.



Carol H. told us about the beautifully photographed antics of young Great Crested Grebes and a parent bathing. There are two young families on the Lake at the moment.

Emily N. showed a photo of the endangered Matted Flax-lily *Dianella amoena* that we hope to find on our Sunday field trip at Victoria Park, along with a couple of photos illustrating the scenery and birds (i.e. Magpie Geese) that members could see if we organise a paddle-steamer trip on Lake Wendouree (see page 7). She also showed a photo of a Spotted Amber Ladybird, *Hippodamia variegata* that she found on a rock beside the lake on the SEANA Autumn Camp in 2015 (see below).

Andy A. showed photos of a Laughing Kookaburra at the North Gardens Wetland.

(Continued pp.7 to 11)



Spotted Amber Ladybird (*Hippodamia variegata*)



Birds of Lake Wendouree

One of the commonest residents is the Black Swan (*Cygnus atratus*)
While above is a pair of Magpie Geese (*Anseranas semipalmata*) more
usually residents of more northern climes, but they are quite at home in the
middle of the Lake.





Field Nats were not the only one taking a keen interest in the Matted Flax--
lily (*Dianella amoena*)
This Blue Banded Bee (*Amegilla cingulate*) is also taking advantage of
flowering of this rare plant.
Photo: Emily Noble

Announcing the dates for the
Great Southern Bioblitz 2022!
October 28 to 31



Mark your calendar now!

Peter and Claire D. showed us images of Lake Wendouree in 2007 when it was dry along with some of the things that could be seen in the lake bed at that time, like mussel shells on the surface and a dead eel. More photos followed of the lake in June 2007 with some water back in it again, then dry again in Summer 2008, with masses of Fairy Grass seedheads that had blown from the lake bed into the gardens of adjoining properties. They also showed photos of the fire in the middle of the lake bed in 2009. (see images and their report on pages 10 and 11)

Val H. presented some photos of storm damage to the Ballarat Botanical Gardens in Nov. 2021: a huge pine near the floral clock, a family of swans with ripped off branches in the background, images taken from the paddle-steamer on Australia Day, a pair of Grey Teal near the Olympic Rings with three youngsters, families of Dusky Moorhen and Black Swans with cygnets.

Many thanks to Graeme L. for managing the IT for this part of the meeting.

Sympathy

Members will be saddened to learn of the passing of Anna Baulch in late January, following a short illness. Anna and husband Chris were members of our club for many years. They mainly enjoyed the stimulus of our Friday night meetings and reading the Newsletters. Anna, with her friendly personality, particularly enjoyed chatting to everyone at supper time. She will be greatly missed and our thoughts are with Chris and the family at this time.



Peter and Claire decided to delve into some pictures of when Lake Wendouree dried out due to the extended drought in the 2000s. Pictures were taken between 2007 and 2009. Some of our members have clear memories of this rare event but others have settled in our area more recently and may not have experienced the lake dry.

We included pictures of muddy edges gradually extending further into the lake. Warning signs to motorists appeared and deeper cracks until finally, we could walk across the lake. There were numerous shrivelled eels, dead fresh water mussels and eventually fairy grass.

This was a major nuisance as it accumulated in yards and gardens both around Lake Wendouree and the township of Learmonth. People walked across the lakes, both privately and with leaders.

One of the most surprising events was when the “lake” caught fire. By then the surface was hard enough to support fire vehicles. It did look strange to see smoke in place of water.

Claire and Peter D.





Fairy Grass
(*Agrostis avenacea*),
also known as
blown-grass



The lake on fire
Dec 29, 2008



Get out your Diary!
(Excursions and Meetings in 2022)

Mar 4 Friday: On Zoom. Annual General Meeting including election of office bearers for 2022. Closely followed by the March meeting. This will be a Members' Images night, so please dig out your latest and greatest to share with the club. Send either pics or powerpoint files direct to Graeme Lunt or be willing to share your screen.

Theme = Not So Creepy Crawlies.

Mar 6 Sunday: Wetlands Excursion to view dragonflies and damselflies. Meet at Fed Uni carpark cnr Gregory and Gillies Sts to convoy, depart at 10.00 am sharp.

First stop is Mullawallah, followed by Haddon Common and finally Surface Hill, off the Ross Creek - Smythesdale Rd. Viewing dragonflies from a seat is recommended! So, bring lunch, a comfy chair, thermos, camera, etc. We will stop for lunch at Haddon

It continues to be difficult to organise speakers and meetings in person, so please check regular emails for news of Field Nats events in 2022.

We continue to abide by current COVID rules and restrictions.

Please note that you must be fully-vaccinated when taking part in face-to-face club activities.

If you are not well or are suffering any flu-like symptoms, please stay at home to minimise the risk to others.

Committee

President	Bill Elder
Secretary	Emily Noble
Treasurer	Kathy Elder
	Andy Arnold
	Bernadette Cheesman
	Val Hocking
	Graeme Lunt
	John Petheram

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Meetings - may continue to be held via Zoom.

Members will be kept informed of arrangements each month.

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